

ELECTION AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

2023 GENERAL SESSION

STATE OF UTAH

Chief Sponsor: Mike Schultz

Senate Sponsor: _____

LONG TITLE

General Description:

This bill requires and addresses a biennial audit of elections, conducted by the Office of the Legislative Auditor General (office).

Highlighted Provisions:

This bill:

- ▶ requires the office to conduct a biennial audit of elections and related processes throughout the state that includes regular primary elections and regular general elections;
- ▶ describes the conduct and scope of the audit;
- ▶ addresses the office's authority and access to records, facilities, and equipment to enable the office to conduct the audit;
- ▶ requires compliance by government officials and employees in relation to the audit;
- ▶ preserves the right to a secret ballot; and
- ▶ makes conforming changes.

Money Appropriated in this Bill:

None

Other Special Clauses:

None

Utah Code Sections Affected:

AMENDS:



28 **20A-4-102**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 342
29 **20A-4-106**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2020, Chapter 31
30 **20A-4-202**, as last amended by Laws of Utah 2022, Chapter 156

31 ENACTS:

32 **36-12-15.2**, Utah Code Annotated 1953

34 *Be it enacted by the Legislature of the state of Utah:*

35 Section 1. Section **20A-4-102** is amended to read:

36 **20A-4-102. Manual ballots cast at a polling place -- Counting manual ballots at**
37 **polling place on day of election after polls close.**

38 (1) (a) This section governs counting manual ballots on the day of an election, if:

39 (i) the ballots are cast at a polling place; and

40 (ii) the ballots are counted at the polling place after the polls close.

41 (b) Except as provided in Subsection (2) or a rule made under Subsection

42 **20A-4-101**(2)(f)(i), as soon as the polls have been closed and the last qualified voter has voted,
43 the election judges shall count the ballots by performing the tasks specified in this section in
44 the order that they are specified.

45 (c) To resolve questions that arise during the counting of ballots, a counting judge shall
46 apply the standards and requirements of:

47 (i) to the extent applicable, Section **20A-4-105**; and

48 (ii) as applicable, for an instant runoff voting race under Part 6, Municipal Alternate
49 Voting Methods Pilot Project, Subsections **20A-4-603**(3) through (5).

50 (2) (a) First, the election judges shall count the number of ballots in the ballot box.

51 (b) (i) If there are more ballots in the ballot box than there are names entered in the
52 pollbook, the judges shall examine the official endorsements on the ballots.

53 (ii) If, in the unanimous opinion of the judges, any of the ballots do not bear the proper
54 official endorsement, the judges shall put those ballots in an excess ballot file and not count
55 them.

56 (c) (i) If, after examining the official endorsements, there are still more ballots in the
57 ballot box than there are names entered in the pollbook, the judges shall place the remaining
58 ballots back in the ballot box.

(ii) One of the judges, without looking, shall draw a number of ballots equal to the excess from the ballot box.

(iii) The judges shall put those excess ballots into the excess ballot envelope and not count them.

(d) When the ballots in the ballot box equal the number of names entered in the pollbook, the judges shall count the votes.

(3) The judges shall:

(a) place all unused ballots in the envelope or container provided for return to the county clerk or city recorder; and

(b) seal that envelope or container.

(4) The judges shall:

(a) place all of the provisional ballot envelopes in the envelope provided for them for return to the election officer; and

(b) seal that envelope or container.

(5) (a) In counting the votes, the election judges shall read and count each ballot separately.

(b) In regular primary elections the judges shall:

(i) count the number of ballots cast for each party;

(ii) place the ballots cast for each party in separate piles; and

(iii) count all the ballots for one party before beginning to count the ballots cast for other parties.

(6) (a) In all elections, the counting judges shall, except as provided in Part 6, Municipal Alternate Voting Methods Pilot Project, or a rule made under Subsection 20A-4-101(2)(f)(i):

(i) count one vote for each candidate designated by the marks in the squares next to the candidate's name;

(ii) count each vote for each write-in candidate who has qualified by filing a declaration of candidacy under Section 20A-9-601;

(iii) read every name marked on the ballot and mark every name upon the tally sheets before another ballot is counted;

(iv) evaluate each ballot and each vote based on the standards and requirements of

Section [20A-4-105](#);

(v) write the word "spoiled" on the back of each ballot that lacks the official endorsement and deposit it in the spoiled ballot envelope; and

(vi) read, count, and record upon the tally sheets the votes that each candidate and ballot proposition received from all ballots, except excess or spoiled ballots.

(b) Election judges need not tally write-in votes for fictitious persons, nonpersons, or persons clearly not eligible to qualify for office.

(c) The judges shall certify to the accuracy and completeness of the tally list in the space provided on the tally list.

(d) When the judges have counted all of the voted ballots, they shall record the results on the total votes cast form.

(7) (a) [~~Only~~] Except as provided in Subsection (7)(b), only an election judge and a watcher may be present at the place where counting is conducted until the count is completed.

(b) An auditor conducting an audit described in Section [36-12-15.2](#) may be present at the place where counting is conducted, regardless of whether the count is completed.

Section 2. Section **20A-4-106** is amended to read:

20A-4-106. Manual ballots -- Sealing.

(1) After the official canvas of an election, the election officer shall store all election returns in containers that identify the containers' contents.

(2) After the ballots are stored under Subsection (1), the ballots may not be examined by anyone, except:

(a) when examined during a recount conducted under the authority of Section [20A-4-401](#) or Title 20A, Chapter 4, Part 6, Municipal Alternate Voting Methods Pilot Project[-]; or

(b) when examined by an auditor conducting an audit described in Section [36-12-15.2](#).

Section 3. Section **20A-4-202** is amended to read:

20A-4-202. Election officers -- Disposition of ballots -- Release of number of provisional ballots cast.

(1) Upon receipt of the election returns from the poll workers, the election officer shall:

(a) ensure that the poll workers have provided all of the ballots and election returns;

(b) inspect the ballots and election returns to ensure that they are sealed;

(c) for manual ballots, deposit and lock the ballots and election returns in a safe and secure place;

(d) for mechanical ballots:

(i) count the ballots; and

(ii) deposit and lock the ballots and election returns in a safe and secure place; and

(e) for bond elections, provide a copy of the election results to the board of canvassers of the local political subdivision that called the bond election.

(2) Each election officer shall:

(a) before 5 p.m. on the day after the date of the election, determine the number of provisional ballots cast within the election officer's jurisdiction and make that number available to the public;

(b) preserve ballots for 22 months after the election or until the time has expired during which the ballots could be used in an election contest;

(c) preserve all other official election returns for at least 22 months after an election; and

(d) after that time, destroy them without opening or examining them.

(3) (a) The election officer shall package and retain all tabulating cards and other materials used in the programming of the automatic tabulating equipment.

(b) The election officer:

(i) may access these tabulating cards and other materials;

(ii) may make copies of these materials and make changes to the copies;

(iii) may not alter or make changes to the materials themselves; and

(iv) within 22 months after the election in which they were used, may dispose of those materials or retain them.

(4) (a) If an election contest is begun within 12 months, the election officer shall, except as provided in Subsection (4)(c):

(i) keep the ballots and election returns unopened and unaltered until the contest is complete; or

(ii) surrender the ballots and election returns to the custody of the court having jurisdiction of the contest when ordered or subpoenaed to do so by that court.

(b) ~~When~~ Except as provided in Subsection (4)(c), when all election contests arising

from an election are complete, the election officer shall either:

(i) retain the ballots and election returns until the time for preserving them under this section has run; or

(ii) destroy the ballots and election returns remaining in the election officer's custody without opening or examining them if the time for preserving them under this section has run.

(c) An auditor conducting an audit described in Section 36-12-15.2 may examine the ballots and election returns described in this Subsection (4).

(5) (a) Notwithstanding the provisions of this section, the legislative auditor general:

(i) may make and keep copies of ballots or election returns as part of a legislative audit; and

(ii) may not examine, make copies, or keep copies, of a ballot in a manner that identifies a ballot with the voter who casts the ballot.

(b) A copy described in Subsection (5)(a) is not a record, and not subject to disclosure, under Title 63G, Chapter 2, Government Records Access and Management Act.

Section 4. Section 36-12-15.2 is enacted to read:

36-12-15.2. Elections audit.

(1) As used in this section, "office" means the Office of the Legislative Auditor General.

(2) In addition to other audits performed by the office, the office shall, each even-numbered year, in accordance with this section and under the direction of the Legislative Audit Subcommittee, conduct a comprehensive performance audit of the state's election system and controls.

(3) The audit may include the entire election process for the elections held in an-even-numbered year, including:

(a) procedures and practices that occur before or after the beginning of the year to prepare for the elections; and

(b) procedures, practices, and standards relating to:

(i) voter registration;

(ii) candidate filing and selection;

(iii) the preparation, printing, distribution, handling, examining, counting, and all other handling of ballots; and

183 (iv) the entire election process, including the regular primary election, the regular
184 general election, and the determination of election results.

185 (4) The audit extends to the functions of all persons involved in the election process,
186 including the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, each county clerk's office, and each board of
187 canvassers.

188 (5) At a minimum, the office shall conduct a survey to audit the work of Office of the
189 Lieutenant Governor and each county election office.

190 (6) Based on the results of the survey described in Subsection (5), the office shall
191 conduct a more comprehensive audit of the jurisdictions or practices that, in the opinion of the
192 office, present the highest risk.

193 (7) In addition to auditing the jurisdictions and practices described in Subsection (6),
194 the office may audit any other jurisdictions or entities, or any practices or procedures, that the
195 office determines necessary to ensure the success of a comprehensive performance audit of the
196 election system.

197 (8) To conduct an audit described in this section, the office has the full authority
198 described in Section 36-12-15, including:

199 (a) full access to all records, documents, recordings, and other information the office
200 determines to be useful in conducting an audit described in this section;

201 (b) full access to ballots, ballot envelopes, vote tallies, canvassing records, and voter
202 registration records;

203 (c) full access to all facilities, storage areas, equipment, and materials the office
204 determines to be useful in conducting an audit described in this section;

205 (d) full access to all staff, including full-time, part-time, and volunteer staff;

206 (e) full access to all records and information relating to election audits that are
207 conducted by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor, a county clerk, or any other person;

208 (f) the right to attend any meeting, including a closed meeting;

209 (g) the right to closely observe and examine any work or other process; and

210 (h) all other authority described in Section 36-12-15.

211 (9) As with any audit conducted under the authority described in Section 36-12-15, all
212 officials and staff shall fully assist, and cooperate with, the office in conducting an audit
213 described in this section.

214 (10) The office shall conduct the audit described in this section in a manner that
215 preserves the right of a voter to a secret ballot.